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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, accept our praise and thanksgiving. You have been better to us than we deserve, for Your goodness and mercy pursue us each day. Great is Your faithfulness.

Lord, increase the faith of our lawmakers. Inspire them to believe that You can empower them to succeed in their striving to keep our Nation strong. Fill them with reverential awe as You thwart the schemes of the enemies of freedom. May our Senators comprehend the fact that Your intentions will prevail.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs).

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT LIMIT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, Senate Democrats blocked a vote on a clean government funding piece of legislation. Senator SHELBY and I put forward legislation that could pass the Senate easily and keep the government open. We were ready to avoid a shutdown, get urgent relief to Louisiana, help vetted Afghans who helped America, and continue supporting Israel's Iron Dome, which saves innocent lives.

Senate Republicans were ready, and House Democratic leaders say they will act on whatever CR we send them. But Democrats blocked the Senate from even considering our legislation. Instead, the Democratic leader held a vote that he knew would fail on a bill he knew was a nonstarter—game-playing instead of governing.

So look, Mr. President, for more than 2 months—2 months—Republicans have explained that the unified Democratic Party government will not get bipartisan support for a debt limit hike

while they write a partisan taxing-and-spending spree behind closed doors. It is as simple as that.

Bipartisanship isn't a light switch that Democrats can switch on when they need to borrow money and flip off when they want to spend money. If Democrats want to use fast-track, party-line procedures to ram through trillions more in inflationary socialism, they will have to use the same tools to handle the debt limit. They have known this for more than 2 months. I made it perfectly clear 2 months ago.

The debt suspension that expired in August covered all the debt that had been actually accumulated by that date. Let me say that again. The debt suspension that expired in August covered all the debt that had been accumulated by that date. This is an argument not about the past but about the future, a future that Democrats have willfully decided they want to own on a party-line basis.

There is no constant tradition that says one-party governments get bipartisan help with the debt limit. That has been said over and over by the press, by the Democrats. Let me make it clear. There is no constant tradition that says one-party governments get bipartisan help with the debt limit.

Just between 2003 and 2010, there were five—five—occasions when the party in power had to get a debt limit hike through the Senate by themselves—five times. Interestingly enough, then-Senators Biden and SCHUMER voted no on raising the debt limit under President Bush 43 and made the united Republican government do it by themselves.

So, look, it is time for our Democratic colleagues to stop dragging their heels and get moving. They have had more than 2 months to accept it. Secretary Yellen just announced a new estimate that action on the debt limit may be necessary as early as October 18. Democrats will need to handle the debt limit before then.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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But Democrats in Congress don't seem to be acting with any urgency. The Senate spends day after day on midlevel nominations, and our colleagues spend all their time in backroom talks over partisan plans while their basic duties sit here in limbo. So far, Democrats' partisan ambitions have taken precedence over basic governance. That needs to change. According to their own Treasury Secretary, they have a few weeks to finally get moving.

BUDGET

Mr. President, now, on a related matter, while Washington Democrats neglect basic governance, they are still trying to write another reckless taxing-and-spending spree behind closed doors. Many details are still fuzzy, but one basic truth is very clear: Their far-left wish list will hurt families and help China—new pain and new burdens for American families, and new advantages for competitors like China.

Take, for example, the Democrats' radical anti-energy agenda that is downstream from the Green New Deal. This sprawling plan for more Washington intrusion into families' everyday lives is set to upend the reliable and affordable domestic energy that literally drives our country. The Democrats' effort to enforce elite liberal fashions would directly target the jobs and the industries that support some of the hardest working blue-collar communities in our country.

Some families would lose their livelihoods altogether. Many more would face higher heating bills, higher electric bills, and higher prices to put gas in their cars. Democrats want to tear a big hole in Americans' wallets, right where they can least afford it.

Right now, as we speak, many of our allies in Europe are preparing for major energy disruption this coming winter. Here are a few recent headlines:

Europeans brace for hard winter as energy price surge hits households.

Empty shelves, gasoline shortages and sky-high energy prices? Britain is facing a 'difficult winter.'

Germans' Green Energy Resolve Faces Pain in Post-Election Winter.

And from just yesterday:

Europe's Energy Crisis Is Coming for the Rest of the World, Too.

This is no time for America to declare war on our own independence, on the affordable forms of energy that power our country. The rest of the world is battenning down the hatches for a global natural gas crunch that could leave entire countries rationing winter heat, and President Biden wants to let radical progressives declare war on American fossil fuels? Really? Is this a joke?

The latest taxing-and-spending spree would open multiple new fronts in the Big Government war on fossil fuels. It would make our electricity grid more like California's: higher costs, less reliability, and more blackouts. It would slap countless new costs and fees on domestic production and ban important

prospects for U.S. drilling. It would double down on the Obama administration's ham-fisted effort to police emissions that was so legally bizarre it couldn't get past the Supreme Court.

American families and American workers benefit from energy that is affordable and abundant. Washington Democrats are pursuing far-left policies that would reduce supply and jack up prices.

So Democrats' plans would have American families hurting badly, but it is not even like all this sacrifice would buy us some big national advantage. It is just the opposite. Their proposals would be a huge gift—a huge gift—to adversaries like Russia and China. They would set the United States back on the global stage.

To give just one example, the Democrats are drafting blunt mandates for more solar panels. Somebody should tell our colleagues that China currently supplies about three-quarters of the world's solar panels. They have also largely cornered the market on some of the necessary raw materials and critical minerals.

So, look, we are going to borrow money from China to send a windfall right back to Chinese miners and manufacturers? Is that the master plan? I am not sure any of these ideas have received more than 5 minutes of thought, but in a matter of days they want to turn all these hair-brained schemes actually into law, and the Chinese solar bailout is just one example.

Let's look at the big picture. Countries that wish us harm will be thrilled to see America make ourselves less competitive and more reliant on imports. They will go roaring by us, increasing their prosperity and emissions, no matter what we do. It hurts families. It helps China.

A war on American energy just as the rest of the world is steeling for shortages—this is just one piece of the Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree, along with historic tax hikes, more intrusion into family lives, and new IRS snooping in every citizen transaction over a few hundred dollars—hurting families and helping China.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, last night was a low point in the recent history of this Chamber. With the government shutdown only days away and a default crisis coming in a matter of weeks, the Senate was faced with a simple and urgent question: Shall the

Members of this Chamber allow the Federal Government to pay its debt and stay open, or will its Members accelerate our country toward a shutdown and a first-ever default?

Yesterday, we got our answer. Republicans voted unanimously—unanimously—to block legislation to keep the government open and prevent an unnecessary default on our debt.

Republicans are now the official party of default, the party that says America doesn't pay its debts; the party that runs up the balance on the credit card, receives an invoice in the mail, and sends the bill straight to the shredder.

No average family could get away with what the Republicans are trying to do; that is for sure. But Republicans here shrug their shoulders and say: We incurred the debt, but we don't have to pay it. Republicans would let the country default for the first time in history, and it will be the American people who pay the price.

Now, Republicans have said for weeks—for weeks—that the United States must never be allowed to default. They said the debt ceiling, of course, needed to be raised. They said to do so otherwise was to play with fire. But when given the chance to actually put the fire out, Republicans chose to spray it with gasoline instead. And now our country is staring down the barrel of two Republican-manufactured crises: a government shutdown and a default on the national debt.

But, fortunately, there is an easy way to stave off disaster. Last night, the Republican leader—I believe he did again this morning—last night and this morning, the Republican leader cited an example from the 2000s, during which Republicans held unified control of government and provided the votes to increase the debt limit. The Republican leader said that example was “exactly the situation we are in now.”

What Leader MCCONNELL conveniently left out is that back then, there was a consent agreement, requested by the Republican majority leader, that cleared the path for the Senate to vote to increase the debt limit at a majority threshold—only one party—allowing the minority party to vote no but also preventing a catastrophic default.

Let me be clear: I am still of the belief that addressing the debt limit, which includes debts incurred by both parties, should be done in a bipartisan way. But let's see if Leader MCCONNELL truly wants what he is asking for, truly wants what he favorably looked upon as happening in the early 2000s to allow to happen again.

Later this afternoon, I will ask unanimous consent for the Senate to hold a vote to increase the debt limit at a majority threshold. In other words, we would get consent that you only need 50 votes, not 60, on this vote to increase the debt limit. And that is what happened in the past.

It would be very similar to the process that Leader MCCONNELL cited yesterday, favorably, which allowed for